UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Office of Marketing Services

August 1945

FACT SHEET ON POULTRY

What We're Up Against:

Despite Victory in Europe, the demands of the Armed Forces for chicken continue high. Fighting men want their chicken -- and then some more chicken. The same thing -- only more so -- applies to wounded men. Chicken is not only a good nutritive food -- it's a peculiarly effective morale building food. It keeps troops happy and "sharp". It must be furnished -- in the quantities fighters want to eat.

With a shifting of action to the Pacific and redeployment of large numbers of men to that area -- the chicken situation becomes more critical. Longer supply lines take more chicken to feed the same number of men. There's also a shifting in the "chicken emphasis". In Europe, U. S. Troops had big, modern bases in England and later, in France. No such bases exist or can exist in the Pacific -- the area just isn't highly industrialized (except Japan proper).

While considerable amounts of fresh chicken are still a necessity -- there's great need for canned chicken. That's because of supply lines, the necessity for saving cargo space and particularly because of the refrigeration problem in tropical climates. There isn't and can't be enough refrigeration. This adds up to more canned chicken. Special needs for canned chicken are also higher. The bombers on the long runs over Japan can't prepare fresh chicken. They can use the canned product -- and they're demanding it. Same thing goes for the American subs blockading Japanese supply lines throughout the Pacific. All the tough inaccessible, hot spots of the world can be served by canned chicken even though many of them can't be effectively reached by fresh chicken.

There's simply got to be MORE chicken (fowl) available for canning.

What's Been Done Heretofore:

To furnish turkeys for Armed Forces holiday meals, a War Food Order (No. 106) has been doing a good job. To obtain fresh New York Style dressed poultry -- mostly broilers and fryers -- War Food Order 119 has been doing a good job. There's also a War Food Order (No. 125) with respect to canning. It provides for canning facilities -- but doesn't provide the chicken to go in the cans.

Up to now the U. S. Army Quartermaster Corps (which procures chicken for the use of all fighting forces) has been obtaining canning chicken (mostly fowl) for canning purposes through voluntary arrangements with a number of processors and handlers of poultry. A considerable number of these processors have done fine work -- but they can't get the chicken to process and pass on to the canners. As a matter of fact, by last December, Army chicken requirements were 110,000,000 lbs. short of schedule.

Strictly voluntary procurement of fowl hasn't worked. The other War Food Orders applicable to poultry don't really touch the fowl situation.

Something More Had to Be Done:

It had to be done -- and it is now going to be done. The action now being taken has been thoroughly discussed with the poultry industry -- and it tries to overcome the major objections -- and still get the chicken the Army must have.

A new War Food Order (No. 142) has been issued -- primarily to obtain the fowl and heavy chickens needed for canning. This order makes it mandatory for authorized processing plants in 12 states to reserve 50 percent of the poultry they process for Army purchase.

Processing plants must either obtain "authorization" -- or limit the size of their business to the maximum of 20,000 pounds weekly prescribed by the order for non-authorized plants. Poultry processors in the designated areas who did not process more than 1,000 pounds of poultry in any week in 1944, cannot be authorized and are limited to the processing of 1,000 pounds for the remainder of 1945, or for the duration of the order, whichever is the shorter period.

The order is effective in the twelve major producing states of North Dakota; South Dakota; Nebraska; Kansas; Oklahoma; Texas; Minnesota; Iowa; Missouri; Wisconsin; and Indiana and Illinois.

While a part of the canned poultry requirement -- nearly one-half -- may be supplied by using turkeys, the major portion must be derived from fowl (hens or other heavy chickens).

In this connection it must be clearly understood that farmers and poultrymen are not being urged to sell their laying hens. We must not jeopardize the Nation's egg supply for next year. Under this program it is urged that when the farmer or poultryman, in carrying on normal culling operations, has hens to sell that he sell them only to authorized suppliers who are supplying the QMC.

Something to Think About:

Getting the chickens to the right processing plants -- the "authorized" processing plants will be no simple job. The provisions of the new War Food Order will do a lot toward helping.

One provision, for example, prohibits the shipment or delivery of live poultry in the restricted area, more than 100 miles from the farm where it was produced, except by those having a letter of authority issued by the Deputy Order Administrator. Letters of authority will be issued only to authorized processors.

But, a Lot of Information Must Be Distributed:

If farmers, consumers, processors, store owners -- everybody in the states affected, realize that the chicken is needed for fighting men -- truly needed -- it will be much simpler to obtain.

Your help is requested in getting this story across by every possible means.

There must be a public sentiment FOR getting chickens to authorized processors if our fighting men in the Pacific -- and wounded men -- are going to get the chicken they want. There must be a public sentiment AGAINST the fly-by-night, the occasional chiseler, the profit-blind patriot or the people who just don't know or haven't been told the story.

Procurement of Chicken "For Fighters, First" Requires:

1. Producers of poultry who sell to "authorized processors." The Army can't buy live chickens and process them. It must buy from plants which maintain good sanitary standards, which prepare and pack properly, which deliver promptly.

2. Authorized processors who will purchase and process poultry for the armed forces -- purchase to be made either directly from farmers or from farmers' agents.

3. The public must be willing to accept shortened supplies and NOT patronize black market poultry channels.

4. Cooperative work on the part of newspapers, radio and organized groups to put across the need for cooperation and to drive home the fact that chicken must go to fighters, first.

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Production and Marketing Administration
Washington 25, D. C.

November 1945

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The Problem

End of the war with Japan has resulted in immediate supply and distribution problems in meat chickens and turkeys which have been produced in large numbers this year to meet anticipated full-scale military and civilian requirements for poultry and eggs.

The problem is one of marketing substantial quantities of heavy meat chickens particularly fowl to be culled largely from laying flocks on midwestern farms in the next few weeks, record turkey numbers, and large supplies of broilers and fryers from commercial producing areas.

For the last quarter of 1945, the following volume of poultry must move into market channels for immediate consumption or storage:

1. Approximately 1,200 million pounds of fowl, (40 percent more than the normal flow of fowl at this season) if laying flocks are reduced during the fall and early winter at the rate necessary to avoid excessive egg production in 1946.

2. Nearly half a billion pounds of turkey, representing nearly 20 percent more than the quantity marketed in the same period a year ago.

3. Approximately 200 million pounds of broilers, fryers, and roasters—at least 25 percent more than were sold in civilian trade channels during the same period last year.

Through nationwide efforts of all segments of the industry it is frequently possible to provide temporary solution of a problem involving oversupply. Permanent solution, however, can only result when production is geared to demand. That is the job that lies ahead in the poultry and egg industry.

Until the announcement of goals provides a more adequate yardstick by which to guage 1946 production, the current situation indicates that producers should set their sights toward a reduction in laying flock numbers by January 1946 to about 15 percent below the level of January 1, 1945. This would mean the culling of at least 70 million old hens and inefficient layers in the next few weeks.

Such a reduction anticipates civilian use of eggs in 1946 at from 335 to 350 per capita, compared with the 390 to be consumed in 1945 and the 298 we consumed annually in the prewar years 1935-39.

Turkey production this year is at least 22 percent greater than the 547 million pounds produced in 1944. Because of greatly reduced military demands, the anticipated supply will provide U. S. civilians with a record quantity of nearly 5 pounds per capita, against the 3.3 we ate last year and the 2.6 pounds consumed in the prewar years 1935-39.

Meat chicken production, including broilers, will exceed 1944 production of 3,460 million pounds by about 5 or 6 percent. This supply, because of reduced military requirements, will provide about 25 pounds per capita this year for civilians, compared with 23.6 pounds consumed in 1944 and 17.9 pounds consumed in the prewar years 1935-39. In addition, the fowl marketed, if laying flocks are reduced by 15 percent, would provide another 2 1/2 pounds of poultry meat per capita.

The Solution

To help solve this problem producers can:

1. Market their poultry in an orderly manner to avoid the overtaxing of transportation and processing facilities.

2. Make certain, before they ship, that processing plants are not already overcrowded and are able to handle their poultry.

3. Market only their finished, mature poultry, and the older hens they are culling from their laying flocks.

4. Stretch out protein feed supplies—and the marketing season—by using more grain feed where it is available.

5. Consider the future market for poultry products when buying chicks for flock replacement.

6. Plan on a 1946 laying flock make-up of not less than 75 percent pullets, and keep them separated from old hens to reduce mortality losses.

7. Eat or preserve by home canning as much poultry meat as possible on the farm and encourage consumption among neighbors and townspeople.

8. Make full use of home freezer lockers as a means of keeping poultry fresh and ready to cook.

All Consumers:

9. Can help by serving poultry as often as possible and by making certain that the family's returning soldier or sailor has a turkey or chicken dinner to welcome him.

The General Situation

Military demands for all types of poultry, either fresh or canned have been greatly reduced since the end of the war. At the time of the surrender of the Japanese several USDA food orders were in operation for the express purpose of assisting the U. S. Army Quartermaster Corps in obtaining poultry for all American armed forces.

These included War Food Order 119, the broiler procurement order, which had operated in major broiler producing areas since mid-December 1944, and WFO 106, the turkey procurement order which had operated since April 1945 to help supply turkeys for the holiday dinners of American service men and women in all parts of the world. In addition, WFO 142 for chicken procurement, largely in the heavy producing States of the Midwest, had been issued early in August this year to supplement procurement under existing orders—chiefly to obtain fowl to fulfill military requirements for canned poultry. Canning operations, temporarily discontinued a few weeks before the surrender of Japan, were to have been resumed this fall under WFO 125.

Almost immediately following surrender, however, substantial reductions in food procurement for the armed forces were announced. Further reductions were made as American troops enroute from Europe to the Pacific, just before the end of the war, were redeployed for demobilization.

With diminished military food requirements there no longer was need of procurement orders for poultry. Consequently all meat chicken orders, and the turkey order were terminated in September, because the QMC felt it would be possible to purchase all future requirements on the open market.

For a time following termination of the orders, the QMC discontinued the purchase of poultry. Buying was resumed November 1 in the broiler producing areas, to continue at the rate of about a million pounds a week until January 1, 1946—less than 25 percent of the full scale wartime rate of buying.

Without the full scale of military demand for poultry, the fall supply—the heaviest of the year—will have to find an immediate civilian outlet or be stored in public freezers for civilian use later on. Chickens and turkeys available for immediate consumption will be competing with more liberal supplies of the "red" meats than civilians had earlier this year. While this is always true in the fall and early winter, the heavy poultry supply anticipated this fall adds to the problem.

Processing facilities are being heavily taxed to handle the unusual volume of chicken and turkey marketings. Many processing plants have been unable to obtain sufficient skilled labor needed for efficient operations. Consequently, overcrowding of such plants is possible unless producers make every effort toward orderly marketing of poultry.

It is urged that producers make certain that the plants can handle their poultry before they ship. This precaution will help to prevent the clogging of processing plants, help to maintain prices to producers, and to keep poultry moving in civilian trade channels.

Orderly marketing will result if producers plan the selling of their market poultry and the older hens they cull from laying flocks over a longer period of time than usual. This will help maintain a constant and seasonally heavy flow of poultry without the market gluts and price declines likely to result from indiscriminate marketing.

Storage Situation

While the storage situation is currently better than a year ago, freezer space is becoming seasonally tighter. The space remaining available will fill rapidly as the fall marketing season advances and greater numbers of poultry and livestock are processed.

Holdings of all poultry in freezers as of October 1, indicated a supply of 156,483,000 pounds only slightly smaller than for the same date last year and nearly 30 percent greater than average holdings for the five years 1940-44. Of this total, however, 72 million pounds were reported as Government owned—leaving a civilian supply of only slightly more than the average holdings on October 1 in the years 1937-41.

Feed Situation

Added to the prospect of well-filled storage space is the feed situation, particularly as applied to protein feeds for poultry and livestock. The present protein feed situation is extremely tight and is expected to continue so for several months.

As a result, protein feed stocks are running low in feed-deficit areas where large numbers of poultry, chiefly broilers and fryers, are produced. Because the feed shortage may force producers in such areas to sell off their broilers and fryers in large numbers, poultry men in other areas, where feed grains are plentiful, are urged to spread their marketing season over the longest possible period. This will help to keep market channels from clogging as the result of an over-supply and will avoid further congestion when turkey marketings increase seasonally a few weeks before the Thanksgiving holiday.

Availability

Supplies of chicken (all types) and of turkey are expected to be large from now through Spring. Broiler and fryer production in specialized areas such as the Del-mar-va area, is larger than at this time last year, and substantial numbers of heavy baking and stewing chickens will be coming from midwest farms and other sources--for consumption between the present time and next April 1.

Turkeys, especially heavy toms, in 1945 will be a record crop. Most of this must be disposed of before the end of January—in line with historical turkey consuming habits. None of this poultry is under set-aside for Government procurement. Most of the poultry needed for Armed forces feeding during the coming months has been obtained. Only relatively small amounts—to be procured on the open market—will be required for "fill in" purchases.

All of these facts mean that there will be very large quantities of poultry (chicken and turkey) available for civilian purchase. Heavy cullings from egg laying flocks will contribute to large supplies. In all sections of the country, poultry is and probably will be available in plentiful quantities during the next few months.

Desirability

No type of food offers greater merchandising and marketing possibilities than is true of chicken and turkey. Both have long been greatly prized foods and both have shown increased demand during the past few years. Supplies during the recent war years have been far short of consumer demand. There is--right now--a heavy backlog of demand which can be tapped by skillful merchandising to market the large available supplies of poultry in a profitable, orderly fashion.

Chicken and turkey--to vast number of Americans--represent the ultimate in fine foods. This is true because of inherent taste characteristics and because long custom has dictated that chicken and turkey dinners are gala affairs. The experience of the armed forces illustrated this strikingly. Fighters demanded chicken and turkey--because they liked it--and because it represented a lot of things which are essentially American.

There are literally hundreds of methods of preparing chicken and turkey--all good. From the nourishing chicken or turkey broth that gives strength to infants and invalids, to the fried chicken or roast turkey at festive banquets--nearly everyone likes poultry. Not only are all types of poultry almost universally appealing to the taste but they are also excellent from a nutritional standpoint. The meat of poultry (all types) is an efficient or "complete" protein, easily digested and converted into human energy and body replacement.

In the merchandising of poultry, the desirability of these foods should be stressed strongly and repeatedly--from both the taste and the nutritional angles.

Proper cooking--and instructions as to how to cook poultry right--are important in building and holding an expanded market. As a quick reference to proper cooking a copy of USDA "POULTRY COOKING" (F. B. No. 1888) is attached. Quotes, preferably with a USDA credit line--may be made from this booklet--in advertising or promotional material.

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